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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human Rights situation in the Central African Republic

The human rights crisis that Central African Republic (CAR) has seen since the year 2012 persisted in 2017/18. Due to violence by armed militias, more than one in four citizens is either internally displaced or a refugee. Since the first quarter of the year 2017 the number of internally displaced people has increased by more than 70 percent. In the year 2017 some 180.000 people in CAR became displaced. Since December 29, 2017, some 75.000 inhabitants of villages in the Paoua region have left their villages in North-Western CAR due to intense fighting between militias and have searched for protection in the city of Paoua or in neighboring Chad. Due to the insecure situation many aid agencies in the area had to stop their humanitarian programs.

Despite the peaceful democratic transition in the year 2016 and the continued presence of MINUSCA there is no effective protection of the civilian population especially in rural areas. But even in the capital Bangui ethnic and religious conflicts are causing insecurity and violence. Religious or ethnic minority people massively are suffering from indiscriminate attacks by armed groups trying to abuse religion or ethnic identity to enhance their influence and control of infrastructure and rich mineral deposits. Some 70 percent of the territory is controled by various armed groups and not by state security forces. The MINUSCA has to improve its performance on protecting civilians and on rapid deployment in cases of violent conflict due to the restricted number of staff and the geographical dimensions of its deployment in CAR.

The increase of its capacity by 900 soldiers and the renewal of its mandate have been positive steps in order to improve the record of the peacekeeping force. But the deficiencies of the mission have to be addressed, a more effective protection of the civilian population must be ensured. Especially women and girls among internal displaced people and refugees are at risk of gender-based violence. Rape and sex slavery have been used by armed groups as tactics of war. But even regarding MINUSCA staff, allegations of sexual abuse have been raised. These accusations must be addressed und those responsible must be hold to account.

The disastrous security situation and the lack of protection of the civilian population have a massive impact on the humanitarian situation. Some 2.5 million people, more than half of the population today is in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Despite several international donor meetings, sufficient funding for humanitarian activities is lacking. Our human rights organization is deeply concerned about an increasing underfunding of humanitarian relief for CAR's civilian population. The basic humanitarian needs of the civilian population today are covered only by 35 percent. The lack of funding will result in a reduction of humanitarian operations and will lead to more displacement of civilians.

Humanitarian relief efforts have been suffering from increasing attacks on humanitarian workers. In the year 2017 some 13 staff members of aid agencies have been killed due to political violence. More than 200 security incidents involving humanitarian workers have been registered last year.

One of the main factors preventing security and effective peacebuilding is the massive influence of non-state armed groups. The increasing influence of some 12 armed groups deliberately terrorizing the civilian population has been perceived as a major threat to stability and recovery of the country. Unfortunately MINUSCA and state security forces have failed to effectively disarm the militias. Many initiatives to collect arms have were announced by the authorities, but most of these programs have not been implemented properly.

Society for Threatened Peoples is calling upon the Human Rights Council to urge

- all conflict parties in CAR to end armed conflict and to disarm,
- CAR Government to ensure a better and more effective protection of the civilian population,
- CAR Government to ensure the protection of religious and ethnic minorities.